

2009 Houston Yacht Club Turkey Day Regatta

Pos	Sail	Skipper	Crew	Yacht Club	1	2	3	4	Total
1	15360	Clarke Newman	Deanna Newman, Ralph Bilnoski	Rush Creek YC	2/RDG	2	3	2	9
2	14975	Aroldo de Rienzo	Skip Dieball, Pablo Guzman	Rush Creek YC	6	3	1	1	11
3	14136	Benjamin Herman	Cal Herman, Sr., Mason Ryan	Southern YC	1	1	6	5	13
4	15201	Robert Bernhardt	Scott Kirchharr, Dylan Wacker	Buccaneer YC	5	5	4	4	18
5	13931	Scott Barrett	Todd Edwards, Ann Edwards	Bay Waveyland YC	3	4	9	3	19
6	15329	Tommy Meric	Cindy Cady, Hartley Crunk	Southern YC	2	6	7	8	23T
7	115360	Kevin King	Stephen Boettcher, Chris Shipman, Steve Harris	None	4	7	5	7	23T
8	14964	Andrew Lee	Marvin Beckman, Jonathen See, Rachael Spahr	None	8	8	2	11	29
9	15326	Gary Schwantz	Jacques Schwantz, Charles McMullin	Lagos YC	7	10	8	6	31
10	14817	John Womble	Ginger Armstrong, Anne Lee	Rush Creek YC	10	9	10	9	38
11	15410	Ian Edwards	Lindy Edwards, Diana Strickler	NSC (and HYC)	11	11	11	10	43
12	10275	Mark Haas	Tammy Hendrick, Bill Byers	Houston YC	9	12	12	14/DNF	47
13	11815	Bruno Jardin	John Glasscock, Matt Sbaschnig	None	12	13	13	14/DNF	52



By: Clarke Newman

I had pulled a double deck before. I even towed two boats thirty-six hours to Newport for the 2008 NA's, but for the first time in my life, I was headed to a regatta with two Lightnings and only one crew. With the fifth stop on the inaugural ILCA Southwestern Circuit coming up, the Texas District was using that regatta to restart the long-dormant fleet in Houston. The last time there was significant Lightning activity at Houston Yacht Club was the 1960's.

So, the Rush Creek fleet brought down three extra boats for the people in Houston to sail. Well, we brought down two. Mark Hass from Houston was good enough to come up and fetch one—he even brought a trailer and covers.

Anyway, Ian Edwards in Houston, by way of Sydney and Lagos, worked his strange form of fleet building alchemy to line up Houston based teams for six boats (our three from Dallas, his two boats, and a Lightning recently "discovered" in Houston). The teams included some old hands returning to Lightnings, some Lightning sailors recently arriving from Lagos, and some sailors new to Lightnings. All of the frenzy to line up crews created such energy that, for the first time since the 1980's, the Texas District had two regattas with double digit attendees in one year. Now, I know all the east coast guys giggle at the fact that we were thrilled to get thirteen boats at a regatta in Houston, but just two years ago, it was not even conceivable.

Saturday dawned with clouds and rain and temperatures in the low 50's and winds 12—20 out of the north. The trouble is, it stayed that way all day. The winds were up and down a bit, and the rain was heavier at times. I could be wrong, but it seemed heaviest between each of the races.

The Turkey Day Regatta at Houston Yacht Club is really a big boat regatta. So, we shared the race course with a bunch of boats thirty-five to forty feet long. They also had some Ensigns, and this year, they had A-Cats, and Finns as well as Lightnings. The A-Cats and big boats went to a weather mark that half a mile up wind of our mark. The cats went off first followed by two big boat starts. That put the big boats coming back down Galveston Bay while we were going upwind. It made for interesting sailing.

Galveston Bay is very shallow and heavy rain in the Houston area on Friday and a north wind on Saturday made for unusually strong ebb out to the Gulf. That put the current on our bow upwind. It was very important to overstand a bit at the weather mark, and gybe early to the leeward gate. There were a few touched marks in this regatta.

In the first race, fifteen-year-old Ben Herman got away clean at the pin for what was obviously a "get left" strategy. Aroldo de Rienzo from Mexico and Team Newman were right there with him. Tommy Meric from New Orleans and Robert Bernhardt from Florida were working up the left side of the rhumb line, and we all rounded closely in that order. Half way down the first run, we all encountered the mid-course finish line that was an obstruction to anyone not finishing. Ben went around the right end and I went left, Aroldo, who had slipped behind us and Tommy went right through the line. Team de Rienzo dropped their chute and unwound themselves, and that put them back a bit. Team Meric got by us as we sailed around the end of the line, and the positions held for the next three legs. Herman was first, Meric second, Newman third, Bernhardt fourth, and de Rienzo was seventh.

The second race was very much the same thing, as the kid got away again. We were buried at the start as was de Rienzo. Both of us tacked to clear our air only to find that we were being lifted right up to the mark. Everyone down the middle and the right had a hard time getting up the leg. Herman rounded way out in front with Aroldo and I rounded almost overlapped. Scotty Barrett from Bay Waveland sailed really well up the second beat. I am not used to people coming from behind and to leeward to sail up across my bow unless their name is Terhune or Fisher. So, we (I) was a bit frantic about our boat set up. We moved our starboard lead, and that seemed to solve the problem, but not before Scotty rounded in front of us. Somehow, we were able to get past Scotty on the run and the positions held until the finish. So, Team Herman was in front, we finished second, Aroldo finished third, and Scotty was fourth. I thought for a moment that Ben would be unbeatable.

The third race was more of the same, except this time, it was Aroldo who got away left for a sizable victory, Andrew Lee from Houston was second, we were third, Bernhardt was fourth, and Kevin King, another Lagos alumni now in Houston, was fifth. By this time, we'd been out on the Bay in the cold rain for little under five hours.

The fifth race was interesting. This time the middle was more the better route, as the boats working up both sides slipped back a bit. Up the second beat, we were even and three boat lengths to windward of Aroldo going up the middle on port tack. Barrett, Herman, and Bernhardt were clumped together going up the left. They seemed to be lifting out inside of us. So, I tacked away from Aroldo to decrease their leverage. We tacked back to port about two-thirds the distance between the group and Aroldo. I told my crew we would probably lose Aroldo if the right worked out, but I didn't want to risk losing the three to the left since we had no throw out. As it turns out, Aroldo finished about a boat length in front of us for the win, Barrett was third, and Bernhardt was fourth.

Skip Dieball, who was crewing for Aroldo, sponsored a great dinner, and a good time was had by all, and it helped build a connection among the Houston Lightning crowd and with the out-of town contingent. Sunday morning dawned without a cloud in the sky and with no breeze at all. We went out around 11:30 to race in a developing sea breeze that lasted until the Lightning fleet started. The Race Committee abandoned about ten minutes after our start.

We finished with nine points, Aroldo had eleven, Herman had thirteen, Bernhardt finished with eighteen, and Barrett had nineteen to round out the trophies. I want to thank my sister, Deanna, and Ralph Bilnoski for doing a great job and helping me stay so consistent. I also want to thank everyone who made this event way better than we had hoped for just two months ago. We hope that this experience helps get enough people at HYC to reform the fleet there. The Houston group is optimistic about putting a fleet re-activation request to the Spring ILCA Governing Board meeting.

Now it is on to the Sugar Bowl regatta in New Orleans, where Larry Frost and I are tied for the lead going into the final stop on the Southwestern Circuit. We hope that the attendance at that regatta will better still. The number of boats at each stop has been better than the year before, and that is during a year where other regattas have been down. I hope to see you all there!